

Encompass Consultancy Limited

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Name of lead inspector: Rachel Angus, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Encompass Consultancy Limited was inspected in August 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement. Adult learning programmes and apprenticeships were found to require improvement. The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Themes

How well do tutors plan a curriculum that prepares adult learners to build their existing knowledge in order to achieve their goals?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have successfully reshaped the curriculum strategy for adult learning programmes since the previous inspection. They have ceased providing business courses in London funded by advanced learner loans. Leaders have now focused adult learning on beauty courses, professional training courses, such as accountancy, and short courses that prepare adult learners for employment.

Leaders and curriculum managers have sensibly extended their beauty provision to include a general beauty therapy course. Managers recognise that teaching this course develops learners' skills in aspects of beauty therapy that employers require. Tutors rightly identify the need to carefully sequence the general beauty therapy course. They identified that the first cohort of learners needed a lot of help to acquire important knowledge of anatomy and physiology. Managers have therefore extended the length of this course for recently enrolled learners to provide more time for tutors to develop learners' understanding. It is too early to identify the impact of these changes on the progress that learners make.

Leaders have invested in high-quality online resources to support the accountancy curriculum. Learners study independently in their own time with regular one-to-one tutor support. Tutors supplement the online resources with additional helpful materials that help learners build on their existing knowledge very effectively. Tutors provide learners with a sensible sequence in which to study the content. This helps learners to increase their knowledge and their ability to link accounting concepts from different units in preparation for the final assessment. It is too early to identify the success of this curriculum, as no learners have reached the final assessment point at the time of the inspection.

How well do tutors check that apprentices are developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need? How effectively do tutors use assessment information to develop apprentices' knowledge and skills further?

Reasonable progress

Curriculum managers provide an apprenticeship curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to succeed in their own workplace and more widely. For example, tutors ensure that operations managers at one company develop their understanding of this company's theoretical approach to management. Tutors also develop apprentices' knowledge of management theories applied in other industries.

Curriculum staff work successfully with professional bodies to align the development of knowledge in the apprenticeship to the challenging qualification requirements. Tutors use their subject expertise to check apprentices' understanding and use feedback well to correct misconceptions and to identify and fill gaps in apprentices' knowledge.

Most tutors work effectively with employers to coordinate the on- and off-the-job training that apprentices receive. Managers' organisation of workplace projects is particularly effective at allowing apprentices to demonstrate their developing skills. For example, team leader apprentices have successfully executed an 'incomplete jobs' project. This has resulted in increased company revenue by reducing overheads and improving the flow of work.

Tutors use the results of assessment effectively to identify the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to develop. Tutors and apprentices evaluate the development of these during regular coaching sessions. Tutors are less effective at discussing specific examples of gaps in knowledge, skills and behaviours with apprentices and their employers. Consequently, a few apprentices and employers are unclear about how to address these gaps effectively.

How successfully have leaders improved the access that adult learners and apprentices have to advice and guidance that informs their next steps?

Reasonable progress

Tutors provide helpful information and guidance to adult learners. Learners studying beauty courses all follow a business module even if it is not a required component of their course. This curriculum provides learners with important knowledge about self-employment and job-search skills. Learners who aim to progress to university are successfully guided in making their applications.

Tutors have not established a high-quality programme of guidance for learners on accountancy courses. Learners do not understand fully the different professional routes and which route is best for their career goals.

Learners on employability courses receive significant help to search for work as well as support to resolve barriers to employment such as housing issues. Learners following the new stevedoring course shadow different job roles at the docks to gain an insight about the work available. These learners are guaranteed employment if they successfully complete their course.

Tutors provide effective help that enables apprentices to plan their next steps. Most apprentices who have recently completed their programmes have taken on more responsibility at work. Tutors work effectively with workplace managers to ensure that apprentices who complete their course have opportunities to develop their careers further. For example, apprentices who have completed the level 5 operations management apprenticeship have the opportunity to take a prestigious higher-level qualification.

How well have leaders and managers improved the effectiveness of the teaching that learners and apprentices receive? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers place a high priority on ensuring that staff extend and update their subject knowledge and expertise. Beauty tutors receive useful training on new beauty techniques to support learners to develop the knowledge required for their qualification and for future employment. For example, tutors recently received hot stone massage training, which is a popular treatment that many employers offer.

Apprenticeship tutors receive useful training related to the apprenticeship standards that they deliver. For example, management tutors who work in one company have been to Denmark to receive training about a specific approach to developing management capacity. This enables the tutors to contextualise apprentices' knowledge to individual workplaces as well as to the wider business environment.

Curriculum managers effectively share their knowledge of the assessment process with their team of tutors. For example, managers make sure that tutors develop a thorough understanding of apprenticeship end-point assessments. This has had a particularly positive impact on management apprentices, as the majority who have completed so far have achieved a high grade in their assessments.

Following the previous inspection, leaders improved their recruitment process for new tutors. The recruitment process is now rigorous. Tutors are appointed with expert knowledge and effective teaching skills. All new tutors receive a comprehensive induction into the business to develop their understanding of leaders' expectations.

It is too soon to identify fully the impact the improved teaching is having on the acquisition of knowledge and progress that learners make across all of the courses offered.

How successful have managers and tutors been in improving the progress that learners and apprentices make from their starting points? Reasonable progress

Managers have tackled effectively the slow progress that apprentices made towards achieving their qualification. They have worked with tutors and employers to identify and address the causes of slow progress. Apprentices with one employer where there were significant issues are now making rapid progress in the development of their knowledge, skills and behaviour. These apprentices will not complete their qualification within the planned time, but the employer rightly values the high-quality training that apprentices are now receiving.

Tutors now have high expectations of apprentices and, as a result, they challenge apprentices to make substantial progress. Apprentices develop their knowledge, skills and behaviour well and apply them confidently in the workplace. For example, team leader apprentices demonstrate effective planning skills. They creatively identified how to fill job vacancies caused by the departure of long-serving staff.

A small minority of apprentices do not receive the expected level of off-the-job training. They have to complete assessments and tasks for their apprenticeship in their own time, which hinders their ability to make progress.

Most learners on courses funded by adult learner loans develop their skills to a high standard. For example, in beauty, learners gain industry-standard skills in nail technology, make-up and beauty therapy. Tutors record learners' significant achievements in regular reviews of progress. These reviews highlight clearly any skills in which learners require more help to develop their fluency. Tutors provide appropriate support to learners to improve their skills. The curriculum that learners follow equips them well to progress into jobs or to provide treatments on a self-employed basis.

A few tutors do not use their assessment of learners' progress well enough. They identify and correct misconceptions but do not ensure that learners transfer important knowledge to their long-term memory. Consequently, learners repeat their mistakes.

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